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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**METHODOLOGY OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE
ON THE BASIS OF SPEECH ACTS****Shahnoza Jurakulovna Rahimova***Teacher of the Applied English Language Department**Termiz state pedagogical institute**E-mail address: raximovashaxnoza68@gmail.com**Termiz, Uzbekistan***ABOUT ARTICLE**

Key words: pragmatic competence, speech act, illocutionary force, communicative competence, pragmalinguistics, sociopragmatics, pragmatic transfer, interlanguage pragmatics, awareness-raising, explicit instruction, methodology, language teaching.

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Abstract: The present article is devoted to the theoretical foundations and practical methodology of developing the pragmatic competence of language-learning students through the framework of speech act theory. Pragmatic competence - the learner's ability to use language appropriately in social context, to perform and interpret communicative functions, and to relate utterances to the speaker's intentions — is increasingly regarded as a central, yet frequently neglected, component of communicative competence. The article situates pragmatic competence within the influential models of Hymes, Canale and Swain, and Bachman, and then turns to the speech act theory of Austin and Searle as the principal analytical instrument for describing what learners actually need to learn. It distinguishes pragmalinguistic from sociopragmatic knowledge, examines the phenomenon of pragmatic transfer and cross-cultural pragmatic failure, and reviews the empirical evidence in favour of explicit instruction. Building on this foundation, the article proposes a staged, five-phase methodology - diagnosis, awareness-raising, input and noticing, controlled and communicative practice, and assessment - and illustrates it with concrete classroom

techniques for teaching requests, apologies, refusals, complaints, suggestions and compliments. The contribution of the article is a coherent, theoretically grounded yet classroom-applicable procedure that teachers may adopt to make the pragmatic dimension of language an explicit object of instruction.

Introduction. For much of the history of foreign-language teaching, the central object of instruction was the grammatical system of the target language. Learners were judged competent to the extent that they could produce well-formed sentences, conjugate verbs correctly and command an adequate lexicon. The communicative turn of the 1970s and 1980s challenged this narrow conception by insisting that knowing a language means far more than knowing its grammar: it means knowing how to use that grammar to accomplish social purposes in real interaction. The notion of communicative competence, introduced by Hymes in opposition to Chomsky's purely grammatical idea of competence, captured precisely this insight, namely that a speaker must possess not only the rules of grammar but also the rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless [4].

Within this broadened conception, pragmatic competence occupies a distinctive and indispensable place. Pragmatics is the study of language in use, of the relationship between linguistic forms and the contexts in which they are deployed, and of the way speakers convey and hearers recover meanings that go beyond the literal content of utterances. Pragmatic competence, accordingly, may be defined as the learner's ability to perform and to interpret communicative acts appropriately in social context - to make a request that is neither rudely blunt nor excessively elaborate, to apologise in a manner the situation warrants, to recognise that an apparent question may in fact be an invitation, and to weigh the relative power, social distance and degree of imposition that bear upon any given exchange. Crystal usefully describes pragmatics as the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication [14].

Despite its theoretical centrality, pragmatic competence remains, in practice, one of the most neglected dimensions of language instruction. There are several reasons for this neglect. Pragmatic norms are less visible and less codified than grammatical rules; they are bound up with culture and therefore harder to teach and to assess; and the textbooks and materials available to teachers frequently present idealised or impoverished models of interaction that diverge sharply from authentic usage. The consequence is a familiar paradox: advanced

learners may possess an extensive vocabulary and a firm command of syntax yet commit pragmatic errors that strike native speakers as abrupt, evasive or even offensive. Such errors are, moreover, treated more harshly than grammatical ones, for whereas a grammatical slip is attributed to incomplete learning, a pragmatic failure is frequently misread as a flaw of character — as rudeness, arrogance or insincerity [8].

The principal aim of the present article is to articulate a coherent methodology by which teachers may make the development of pragmatic competence an explicit object of instruction, and to ground that methodology in speech act theory. Speech act theory, originating in the work of the philosopher J. L. Austin and systematised by his pupil John Searle, supplies a powerful analytical apparatus for describing exactly what learners must master: not isolated forms, but the relationship between linguistic forms and the actions speakers perform by uttering them. The article first locates pragmatic competence within established models of communicative competence; it then sets out the relevant elements of speech act theory and the closely associated distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics; it reviews the evidence that pragmatic competence can be taught and benefits from explicit instruction; and finally it proposes and illustrates a staged classroom methodology. The underlying conviction is that pragmatics, far from being an unteachable mystery acquired only through immersion, can be approached systematically and made accessible to learners through principled pedagogy.

Materials and methods. The methodological orientation of this study is descriptive, analytical and synthetic. It draws on the foundational literature of pragmatics, speech act theory and interlanguage pragmatics in order to construct a theoretically motivated pedagogical procedure. The materials examined include the seminal philosophical statements of speech act theory, the canonical models of communicative competence, the literature on cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics, and empirical studies of instructed pragmatics. From these sources the study extracts the principles that should govern the teaching of pragmatic competence and organises them into a classroom-ready methodology.

The architecture of communicative competence. Any methodology for teaching pragmatics must begin from a clear account of where pragmatic competence belongs within the broader construct of communicative competence. Canale and Swain proposed an influential four-component model comprising grammatical competence (mastery of the linguistic code), sociolinguistic competence (the appropriate use of language in different social contexts), discourse competence (the ability to combine forms into coherent texts) and strategic competence (the ability to compensate for breakdowns in communication) [5]. Bachman subsequently refined the model by grouping language knowledge into organisational

competence — which subsumes grammatical and textual knowledge — and pragmatic competence, which he in turn divided into illocutionary competence, the knowledge of how to perform and interpret language functions, and sociolinguistic competence, the knowledge of how to use language appropriately according to context [6]. Bachman's contribution is decisive for present purposes, because it places the performance and interpretation of communicative functions — that is, of speech acts — at the very heart of the pragmatic construct.

Austin and the discovery of the performative. Speech act theory begins from a deceptively simple observation. In his lectures published posthumously as *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin challenged the assumption that the primary function of a sentence is to describe a state of affairs and thereby to be either true or false [1]. Many utterances, he noted, do not describe anything at all; they perform actions. When a speaker says "I promise to repay you," "I apologise," or "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth," the utterance does not report a promise, an apology or a naming — it constitutes one. Austin called such utterances performatives and contrasted them with constatives. He soon recognised, however, that the distinction could not be sustained in its original form, since even apparent statements perform the act of asserting. He therefore reconceived the entire theory around the claim that to say something is always to do something.

From this insight Austin derived his celebrated tripartite distinction among the locutionary act, the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act. The locutionary act is the act of producing a meaningful utterance — of saying something with a definite sense and reference. The illocutionary act is the act performed in saying something — promising, warning, requesting, apologising — and is associated with what Austin called the illocutionary force of the utterance. The perlocutionary act is the act performed by saying something, that is, the effect the utterance produces upon the feelings, thoughts or actions of the hearer, such as persuading, frightening or convincing. For the language teacher, the illocutionary dimension is paramount: learners must grasp that a single illocutionary force may be realised by many different forms, and that a single form may carry different forces in different contexts. The utterance "It's cold in here," for example, may function as a simple assertion, as a request to close the window, or as a complaint, depending on the context in which it is produced.

Searle's systematisation. Searle transformed Austin's suggestive observations into a systematic theory [2]. He argued that the production of a speech act is governed by constitutive rules and analysed the conditions that must obtain for an act to be felicitously performed — the propositional content condition, the preparatory conditions, the sincerity condition and the essential condition. For a promise, for instance, the propositional content must concern a future

act of the speaker; the preparatory conditions require that the hearer would prefer the speaker's performing the act and that it is not obvious the speaker would do it anyway; the sincerity condition requires that the speaker intend to perform the act; and the essential condition is that the utterance counts as the undertaking of an obligation. Searle further proposed a five-fold taxonomy of illocutionary acts that has become standard [3]: representatives (or assertives), which commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition, as in stating, claiming or concluding; directives, which attempt to get the hearer to do something, as in requesting, ordering, advising or inviting; commissives, which commit the speaker to a future course of action, as in promising, offering or vowing; expressives, which convey the speaker's psychological state, as in thanking, apologising, congratulating or complimenting; and declarations, which bring about a change in the world by the very fact of their successful performance, as in naming, baptising, resigning or pronouncing a couple married.

This taxonomy is of considerable pedagogical value, for it furnishes the teacher with a principled inventory of the communicative functions that learners must be able to perform. Each category can be linked to a syllabus of speech acts — directives to requests, commands and suggestions; expressives to apologies, thanks, compliments and complaints; commissives to promises, offers and refusals — and each speech act can in turn be analysed into the range of linguistic forms, or strategies, by which it may be realised at varying levels of directness and politeness.

Direct and indirect speech acts. A further element of speech act theory that bears directly on pedagogy is Searle's account of indirect speech acts, in which one illocutionary act is performed by way of performing another. When a dinner guest says "Can you pass the salt?", the literal force of the utterance is a question about ability, but the intended and understood force is a request. Indirectness is pervasive in everyday interaction and is intimately connected with politeness, since indirect formulations typically grant the hearer a face-saving option to decline. The systematic relationship between indirectness and politeness was theorised by Brown and Levinson, whose model of face — the public self-image every competent member of a society claims for himself — explains why speakers so often choose to mitigate face-threatening acts such as requests, refusals and criticisms through indirect and elaborated forms [9]. Leech complemented this account with his Politeness Principle and its constituent maxims of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy, which describe the conversational pressures that lead speakers to depart from maximally efficient expression in the interest of social harmony [7].

Pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Thomas drew a distinction, now fundamental to the field, between two components of pragmatic competence [8]. Pragmalinguistic competence concerns the linguistic resources available for conveying particular illocutionary forces — the range of forms, routines and strategies a language offers for, say, making a request, from the bald imperative "Pass the salt" through the conventionally indirect "Could you pass the salt?" to the hint "This soup needs a little something." Sociopragmatic competence concerns the social perceptions and assessments that determine which form is appropriate in a given context — the learner's understanding of the relative power of the interlocutors, the social distance between them, and the degree of imposition involved, and of how these variables ought to be weighed in a particular speech community. Thomas demonstrated that pragmatic failure may arise from either source: a pragmalinguistic failure occurs when a learner maps the wrong form onto an intended force, while a sociopragmatic failure occurs when a learner miscalculates the social conditions and so produces a form that is grammatically and pragmalinguistically well formed yet inappropriate. The distinction has important pedagogical consequences, since the two kinds of knowledge call for somewhat different instructional treatment.

Pragmatic transfer and the case for instruction. Learners do not approach the target language as blank slates; they bring to it the pragmatic norms of their first language and frequently transfer those norms, consciously or unconsciously, into their second-language performance. Such pragmatic transfer may be positive, where first- and second-language norms coincide, or negative, where they diverge and the transfer produces inappropriateness. The cross-cultural project of Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper documented in detail how the realisation of requests and apologies varies across languages and cultures, providing an empirical basis for understanding where learners are likely to encounter difficulty [13]. The crucial question for pedagogy is whether instruction can help. The accumulated evidence of interlanguage pragmatics gives a clear affirmative answer. Kasper and Rose, surveying the field, concluded that the great majority of targeted aspects of pragmatics are teachable and that instruction is generally more effective than mere exposure [10]. Bardovi-Harlig, reviewing the empirical evidence specifically on the question of whether instruction in pragmatics is warranted, found consistent support for the proposition that learners who receive instruction outperform those who do not, and that certain features of pragmatics are unlikely to develop from exposure alone [11]. Schmidt's noticing hypothesis offers a theoretical rationale: features of the input must be consciously noticed before they can be acquired, and instruction serves precisely to direct learners' attention to pragmatic features that might otherwise pass

unnoticed [18]. Taguchi's later synthesis of instructed pragmatics confirmed that explicit, awareness-oriented approaches yield robust and durable gains [15].

These materials and the principles distilled from them — the centrality of pragmatic competence, the analytical power of the speech act, the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions of the construct, the reality of pragmatic transfer and the demonstrated effectiveness of explicit instruction — constitute the foundation upon which the methodology set out in the following section is built.

Result and discussion. The principal result of the foregoing analysis is a staged methodology for developing students' pragmatic competence on the basis of speech acts. The methodology rests on three guiding assumptions derived from the literature. First, pragmatic competence is teachable and benefits from explicit attention rather than being left to incidental acquisition. Second, the speech act provides the most productive unit of analysis and of syllabus design, because it links communicative function to linguistic form in a way learners can be made to perceive. Third, instruction must address both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge, for command of forms without an understanding of their conditions of appropriate use is as deficient as social sensitivity without the means to express it. The methodology unfolds in five interrelated phases, which in practice overlap and recur rather than proceeding in strict linear succession.

Phase one: diagnosis and needs analysis. Effective pragmatic instruction begins with an assessment of what learners can already do and where their performance diverges from target norms. The teacher may employ discourse completion tasks, in which learners are presented with a described situation and asked to write what they would say, or short role-plays recorded for later analysis. The purpose is twofold: to reveal the specific speech acts and contexts in which learners experience difficulty, and to make the teacher's own subsequent instruction responsive to genuine need rather than to an idealised syllabus. Diagnosis frequently uncovers systematic patterns of negative transfer — learners who render every request as a bald imperative, for instance, or who decline invitations with a directness that their first-language norms sanction but that the target community would find brusque.

Phase two: awareness-raising. The second phase aims to make learners conscious of the pragmatic dimension of language and of the variability of its realisation. Here the teacher draws explicitly on speech act theory, though not necessarily in its technical vocabulary. Learners are led to see that a single function may be expressed through many forms and that the choice among them is far from free. A productive technique is to present a single speech act realised at several levels of directness and to ask learners to rank the realisations and to specify the

situations in which each would be appropriate. For the act of requesting, for example, the teacher might present the series in the table below and invite learners to consider who might say each to whom.

Strategy	Realisation of the request	Directness
Mood derivable (imperative)	<i>Close the window.</i>	Most direct
Want statement	<i>I'd like you to close the window.</i>	Direct
Query preparatory	<i>Could you close the window?</i>	Conventionally indirect
Strong hint	<i>It's rather draughty in here, isn't it?</i>	Least direct

Working with such a continuum allows learners to discover for themselves that directness is not synonymous with rudeness nor indirectness with politeness in any absolute sense, but that appropriateness is a function of the contextual variables of power, distance and imposition. A request from a manager to a subordinate may legitimately be more direct than the same request between strangers; a small imposition warrants less mitigation than a large one. The teacher's task is to make these calculations, ordinarily performed unconsciously by native speakers, available to conscious inspection.

Phase three: input and noticing. Awareness must be fed by rich and authentic input. The third phase exposes learners to the target speech acts as they occur in genuine or realistic discourse — in recordings of natural conversation, in film and television extracts, in well-constructed dialogues that reflect authentic usage, and increasingly in the abundant audiovisual material now accessible to teachers. The aim, in accordance with Schmidt's noticing hypothesis [18], is to direct learners' attention to the pragmatic features embedded in the input. Crucial here is a critical attitude towards conventional teaching materials, which frequently present apologies, requests and refusals in forms that no fluent speaker would use. Ishihara and Cohen emphasise that teachers should evaluate and, where necessary, supplement or replace the pragmatic models offered by textbooks, and should draw on descriptions of authentic usage and, where available, on corpus data [12]. Noticing may be promoted through guided observation tasks: learners watch a scene and identify the speech act performed, the strategy used, the mitigating devices employed, and the contextual factors that appear to have motivated the speaker's choices.

Phase four: controlled and communicative practice. Understanding must be converted into the ability to perform, and the fourth phase moves learners from recognition to production along a cline from controlled to free practice. Controlled practice may involve completing dialogues, matching forms to situations, transforming a direct request into a conventionally

indirect one, or selecting the appropriate realisation for a described context. As control is relaxed, learners engage in role-plays and simulations that require them to perform target speech acts under conditions approximating real interaction, varying the power, distance and imposition of the situations so that learners must adjust their realisations accordingly. Olshtain and Cohen, in their pioneering work on teaching the apology, demonstrated that complex speech-act behaviour can be taught through carefully sequenced practice that addresses the several semantic formulae — the expression of apology, the acknowledgement of responsibility, the offer of repair, the explanation and the promise of forbearance — of which a full apology may be composed [17]. Role-play is particularly valuable because it engages learners in the on-line management of interaction, where they must not only select an appropriate opening form but also respond to the interlocutor's reaction, repair misunderstandings and bring the exchange to a socially acceptable close.

A central principle governing this phase is that practice should be accompanied by metapragmatic discussion. After a role-play, learners and teacher reflect together on what was said, why it was or was not appropriate, and what alternatives were available. It is in this reflective discussion, rather than in the mechanical repetition of forms, that sociopragmatic understanding is consolidated. The teacher's feedback should address not only the formal correctness of the learners' utterances but their pragmatic appropriateness, and should be framed in terms of the contextual variables that bear upon the choice of form.

Phase five: assessment. The final phase, which in practice informs the whole cycle, is the assessment of pragmatic competence. Cohen observes that assessing pragmatics is intrinsically more demanding than assessing grammar, because appropriateness is graded and context-dependent rather than a matter of right and wrong, and because a range of realisations may be equally acceptable in a given situation [16]. Among the instruments available are written discourse completion tasks, which are economical and allow systematic comparison but capture only learners' off-line knowledge; multiple-choice and judgement tasks, in which learners rate the appropriateness of given realisations; oral role-plays, which assess on-line productive ability under more authentic conditions; and self-assessment, which engages learners in monitoring their own pragmatic development. Whatever instrument is chosen, the assessment criteria should make explicit reference to appropriateness in relation to the contextual variables, so that learners understand pragmatic competence to be the central object of evaluation rather than an optional refinement.

Application to particular speech acts. The methodology acquires concrete shape when applied to specific speech acts. Consider the directive act of requesting. Diagnosis commonly

reveals that learners over-rely on direct imperatives or on a single memorised polite formula; awareness-raising introduces the continuum of directness illustrated above; input exposes learners to the full range of request strategies, including the internal mitigation provided by such devices as please, the past-tense modal could, and the consultative I was wondering if, and the external mitigation provided by grounders that supply a reason for the request; practice has learners produce requests appropriate to systematically varied situations; and assessment evaluates whether they can calibrate directness to context. Consider next the expressive act of apologising. Here learners must master not a single form but the configuration of semantic formulae identified by Olshtain and Cohen, and must learn that the weight of an apology should be proportioned to the gravity of the offence, so that a trivial inconvenience calls for a brief expression of regret while a serious transgression demands an acknowledgement of responsibility, an offer of repair and perhaps a promise of forbearance [17]. The act of refusing — a commissive of particular difficulty — illustrates the dangers of negative transfer with special clarity, for cultures differ markedly in the directness with which refusals may be issued, and learners must acquire the indirect, mitigated and often elaborately face-saving strategies by which speakers of the target language decline an invitation or a request without giving offence.

The same analytical procedure may be applied to complaints, which require learners to express dissatisfaction while managing the substantial threat such acts pose to the hearer's face; to compliments, whose appropriate giving and, equally importantly, appropriate receiving are highly culture-specific; and to suggestions and advice, where learners must judge how far they may legitimately presume to direct another's conduct. In each case the speech act furnishes the organising unit, the distinction between pragmalinguistic form and sociopragmatic condition structures the content, and the five-phase cycle structures the instruction.

Discussion. The methodology outlined above is not a rigid algorithm but a principled framework that teachers must adapt to their learners, their objectives and their circumstances. Several considerations qualify and enrich it. The first concerns the relationship between explicit and implicit instruction. The weight of evidence favours explicit approaches that combine rich input with overt attention to pragmatic features and opportunities for practice and reflection, yet explicitness need not mean the recitation of metalanguage; what matters is that pragmatic features become salient and that learners come to understand the relationship between form, force and context [15]. The second concerns the indispensable role of culture. Because sociopragmatic norms are culturally constituted, the teaching of pragmatics is

inseparable from the development of intercultural understanding, and the aim should be not to impose target-language norms but to make learners aware of the options and their consequences, leaving to learners themselves the ultimate decision as to how they wish to present themselves in the second language. The third concerns the demands the approach places on the teacher, who must possess a sound understanding of the pragmatics of the target language, a critical command of available materials, and the descriptive resources — increasingly furnished by corpus and interlanguage research — on which to draw. The cumulative argument of this article is that none of these demands is insuperable, and that the systematic teaching of pragmatic competence on the basis of speech acts is both feasible and necessary.

Conclusion. This article has argued that pragmatic competence, long treated as a peripheral or even unteachable aspect of language proficiency, can and should be made a central and explicit object of instruction, and that speech act theory furnishes the most productive basis on which to do so. The argument has proceeded from the recognition, secured by the communicative tradition from Hymes onward, that knowing a language entails knowing how to use it appropriately, and that pragmatic competence — the ability to perform and interpret communicative functions in social context — is therefore an integral component of communicative competence rather than an optional ornament upon it.

Speech act theory, in the formulations of Austin and Searle, supplies the analytical instruments required to specify what learners must master: the distinction among the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions of utterance; the taxonomy of representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations; the felicity conditions governing the successful performance of acts; and the pervasive phenomenon of indirectness, with its intimate connection to face and politeness. Complemented by Thomas's distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence and by the findings of interlanguage pragmatics concerning transfer and the effectiveness of instruction, this apparatus translates directly into a programme of teaching.

The methodology proposed here organises that programme into five interrelated phases — diagnosis, awareness-raising, input and noticing, controlled and communicative practice, and assessment — and applies it to the concrete teaching of requests, apologies, refusals, complaints, compliments and suggestions. Its guiding principles are that pragmatic competence is teachable, that the speech act is the productive unit of analysis and design, and that instruction must address both the linguistic forms by which functions are realised and the social conditions that govern their appropriate use. The central pedagogical claim is that the

calculations native speakers perform unconsciously can be made available to learners through principled instruction, and that learners so instructed acquire not merely a stock of forms but the capacity to deploy them appropriately.

Several implications follow for practice and for further inquiry. For the classroom, the approach calls for a critical attitude towards conventional materials, a readiness to draw on authentic and corpus-informed descriptions of usage, and a commitment to metapragmatic reflection alongside communicative practice. For the curriculum, it argues for the systematic inclusion of pragmatic objectives and for assessment instruments that take appropriateness as their explicit criterion. For research, it points to the continuing need for fine-grained descriptions of speech-act realisation across languages, for studies of the relative effectiveness of particular instructional techniques, and for investigations of the long-term retention and transfer of instructed pragmatic competence. The overarching conclusion is that the pragmatic dimension of language, far from lying beyond the reach of teaching, can be brought within it through a methodology grounded in the theory of speech acts — and that doing so is essential if learners are to become not merely grammatically accurate but genuinely communicatively competent.

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